

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 RSC-01 NSCE-00 /073 W

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R 311503Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2408

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MILI, VS

SUBJECT: EXAMPLES OF EFFECTIVE RVNAF PERFORMANCE

REF: STATE 277526

1. EXAMPLES OF EFFECTIVE RVNAF PERFORMANCE PROVIDED BY OUR
CONSULATES GENERAL ARE CONTAINED IN THE PARAGRAPHS BELOW. THESE
EXAMPLES PROTRAY GVN FORCES FIGHTING WITH INTELLIGENCE AND
COURAGE. THEY BEAR OUT THAT RVNAF CAN STAND UP TO THE NVA/VC,
HAS BEEN DOING SO COUNTRYWIDE -- ACQUITTING ITSELF WELL.
ADDITIONAL, MORE VOLUMINOUS MATERIALS GATHERED IN RESPONSE TO
REFTEL ARE BEING POUCHED TO EA/VN.

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2. ONE PARTICULARLY DRAMATIC EXAMPLE OF VALOROUS RVNAF PERFORMANCE, ALBEIT PERHAPS STARKER BECAUSE IN A LOSING BATTLE, EXEMPLIFIES GRAPHICALLY THE RAW COURAGE OF WHICH GVN FORCES ARE CAPABLE. IN THE BATTLE FOR SONG BE, THE CAPTIAL CITY OF PHUOC LONG PROVINCE, WHICH FELL TO COMMUNIST FORCES ON JANUARY 6, HEAVY COMMUNIST ARMOR WAS UTILIZED. IT HAS BEEN ESTIMATED THAT 35 NVA TANKS TOOK PART IN THIS BATTLE. GVN FORCES ARE KNOWN TO HAVE DESTROYED AT LEAST 17 OF THEM. MUCH OF THIS RESULT IS ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE INCREDIBLE BRAVERY OF INDIVIDUAL SOLDIERS WHO, CARRYING THEIR M-22 LAWS, MOVED INTO POSITION LITERALLY TEN, OR TENS, OF METERS FROM THE ADVANCING TANKS BEFORE FIRING.

SAIGON 3 QUOTE DA NANG 56

3.1 HEREWITH FOLLOWS SOME EXAMPLES OF VALOROUS AND EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE ON THE PART OF RVNAF IN MR-1. WE HOPE THESE WILL BE USEFUL IN ANSWERING THE WHITE HOUSE STAFF REQUEST. WE WILL REMAIN ALERT FOR OTHER EXAMPLES WHICH MIGHT SERVE THE SAME END.

3.2 THE RETAKING OF MO TAU MOUNTAIN: ON DEC. 11 AFTER A LONG-FOUGHT, CAREFULLY PLANNED EFFORT, ARVN RETOOK MO TAU MOUNTAIN SOUTH OF HUE. BETWEEN SEPT. 27 AND 30 NVA/VC FORCES DROVE ARVN DEFENSES OFF THE MOUNTAIN IN A SERIES OF BRIEF BUT OVERWHELMING ATTACKS. WITHIN THE DAY OF THE MOUNTAIN'S LOSS, PHU BAI AIRFIELD WHICH SERVES HUE AND IS THE MAJOR AIRSTRIP IN MR-1 NORTH OF THE HAI VAN PASS WAS CLOSED BY NVA/VC FIRE.

3.3 THE NVA/VC QUICKLY REINFORCED THEIR POSITION ON THE MOUNTAIN WHILE THE GVN FORCES BEGAN THE CAMPAIGN TO RETAKE THE AREA, A TASK WHICH WAS ENTRUSTED TO ELEMENTS OF THE 1ST ARVN INFANTRY DIVISION AND THE 15TH RANGER GROUP. THE MOUNTAIN WAS THEN OCCUPIED BY 4 ENEMY BATTALIONS.

3.4 THE FINAL PHASE OF THE CAMPAIGN TO DISLODGE THE NVA/VC FORCES, COORDINATED WITH ARTILLERY FIRE AND AIR STRIKES, BEGAN ON DEC. 2. IT WAS COMPLETED ON DEC. 11 WHEN ARVN REGAINED THE ENTIRE MO TAU MOUNTAIN COMPLEX. ON THAT DAY THE MEN OF THE 2ND BN OF THE 54TH INF. REGT. WERE IN ALMOST CONSTANT CONTACT WITH THE NVA/VC ON THE SOUTHWEST SLOPE, BUT THE BATTALION SUFFERED ONLY 1 KIA AND 5 WIA, WHILE NVA/VC LOSSES WERE 22 KIA. THE 1ST BN OF THE UNCLASSIFIED

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54TH CLEARED THE ENTIRE SUMMIT OF MO TAU WITH NO LOSSES. MEANWHILE, ELEMENTS OF THE 15TH RANGER GROUP, ATTACKING MO TAU FROM ANOTHER DIRECTION, ADVANCED AGAINST DIRECT 82 MM MORTAR FIRE.

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SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 RSC-01 NSCE-00 /073 W

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R 311503Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2409

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

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3.5 THE CAREFUL PANNING, THE SUPPORT PROVIDED BY ARTILLERY AND AIR STRIKES OF THE VIETNAMESE AIRFORCE, AND ESPECIALLY THE COURAGEOUS FIGHTING OF THE ARVN SOLDIERS OF THE 1ST DIVISION RECONQUERED AN IMPORTANT OBJECTIVE AND RE-ESTABLISHED SUFFICIENT SECURITY IN THE AREA TO PERMIT THE RE-OPENING OF PHU BAI AIRFIELD TO MILITARY TRAFFIC.

3.6 SMALL UNIT ACTIONS IN THE DEFENSE OF MO TAU MOUNTAIN: THE FOLLOWING ARE TWO ROUTINE BUT SIGNIFICANT ENTIRIES EXTRACTED FROM THE 1 CORPS HQS TOC LOG ON THE DATES INDICATED. THEY ARE EXAMPLES OF THE FIGHTING SPIRIT AND DETERMINATION OF ONE OF THE ARVN RANGER BATTALIONS ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEFENDING MO TAU MOUNTAIN, A STRATEGIC HIGHPOINT THAT HAS IN THE PAST BEEN USED

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BY THE NVA/VC AS A FIRE CONTROL OBSERVATION POST FOR ADJUSTING ARTILLERY FIRE ON PHU BAI AIRFIELD, DEPOTS, TRAINING CAMPS, AND ON HIGHWAY 1. (MO TAU WAS RETAKEN BY ARVN FORCES ON DEC. 11 AFTER HAVING BEEN HELD BY NVA/VC TROOPS FOR 2 AND ONE-HALF MONTHS.)

3.7 AT 1600 HOURS JAN 7, 1975, THE NVA/VC ATTACKED THE 3D COMPANY, 61ST RANGER BATTALION, WITH A GROUND ASSAULT AND 50 ROUNDS OF 82MM MORTAR AT A POINT 2 KM SE OF MO TAU MOUNTAIN IN THUA THIEN PROVINCE. AFTER HEAVY FIGHTING, IT WAS DETERMINED THAT THE RANGERS HAD SUFFERED

4 WOUNDED IN ACTION. THE NVA/VC HAD 25 MEN KILLED IN ACTION. GVN TROOPS CAPTURED ONE 82-MM MORTAR, ONE 12.7-MM MACHINEGUN, 4 SMALL ARMS, AND ONE CHICOM TELEPHONE.

3.8 AT 1540 HOURS JAN. 12, 1975, AN ELEMENT OF THE 61ST RANGER BN AGAIN HAD CONTACT WITH A SUPERIOR NVA/VC FORCE AT A POINT 3 KM SOUTHEAST OF MO TAU MOUNTAIN. IN THIS ENGAGEMENT, THE RANGERS SUFFERED 4 WOUNDED IN ACTION WHILE KILLING 13 OF THE NVA/VC AND CAPTURING 2 B40S, 1 M16, AND 1 M79.

3.9 THE RETAKING OF HILL 121: ON JAN 16, 1975, THE 1 CORPS HEADQUARTERS, TACTICAL OPERATIONS CENTER LOG CONTAINED THE FOLLOWING ITEM WHICH IS BUT A SINGLE EXAMPLE OF THE DETERMINATION AND FIGHTING SPIRIT THAT IS BEING DISPLAYED DAILY BY ARVN SOLDIERS IN MR-1.

3.10 BETWEEN 1400 AND 2300 HOURS ON JAN 15, 2.5 KM SOUTHEAST OF NUI BONG MOUNTAIN AT YD 947017, THUA THIEN PROVINCE, THE 3RD COMPANY 1ST BN, 1ST INFANTRY REGIMENT, 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION, OF THE ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM UNDERTOOK A SUCCESSFUL EFFORT TO REGAIN HILL 121 OVERLOOKING HIGHWAY 1, THE VITAL LAND LINK BETWEEN DANANG AND HUE. THE HILL AND ADJACENT HIGH GROUND WAS SEIZED BY THE COMMUNIST FORCES IN AUGUST 1974.

3.11 IN THE JAN 15 CLASH THE ARVN COMPANY ENGAGED NVA FORCES BELIEVED TO BE MEMBERS OF THE 7TH BN, 271ST INFANTRY REGIMENT, 325TH NVA DIVISION. THE GVN TROOPS MET STIFF RESISTANCE FROM A WELL-ENTRENCHED NVA FORCE WHO FIRED OVER 300 ROUNDS OF 82 AND 61 MM MORTAR FIRE IN SUPPORT OF THEIR DEFENSE. DESPITE THIS DETERMINED OPPOSITION, THE GVN SOLDIERS CONTINUED THEIR ASSAULT AND REGAINED THE HILL. THREE GVN SOLDIERS WERE KILLED IN ACTION AND 7 WERE WOUNDED. THE NVA/VC LOSSES WERE 27 KILLED. FOUR WERE CAPTURED, UNCLASSIFIED

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BUT THREE OF THEM LATER DIED OF THEIR WOUNDS.

3.12 THIS IS BUT A SMALL PART OF THE CONTINUING BATTLE THAT IS BEING WAGED DAILY IN THIS AREA, UNHERALDED, IN THE ATTEMPT TO DISLODGE THE COMMUNISTS FROM THE STRATEGIC HIGH GROUND OVERLOOKING HIGHWAY 1 NORTH OF THE HAI VAN PASS WHICH THEY SEIZED IN THEIR

1974 SUMMER-FALL CAMPAIGN. UNQUOTE

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SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 RSC-01 NSCE-00 /073 W

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R 311503Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2410

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

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SAIGON 4 QUOTE DA NANG 64

4.1 HERewith FOLLOWS AN ADDITIONAL RECENT EXAMPLE OF EFFECTIVE
RFNAF PERFORMANCE IN MR-1.

4.2 THE RETAKING OF THE NUI BONG MOUNTAIN AREA: ON JANUARY 17TH,
1975, AFTER A SHORT, INTENSE, BUT CAREFULLY PLANNED AND COORDINATED
CAMPAIGN, ARVN TROOPS OF THE 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION REGAINED THE
CRESTS OF FIVE HILLS WHICH ARE THE DOMINATING TERRAIN IN THE NUI
BONG AREA SOUTH OF HUE. THE 1ST DIVISION UNITS, OPERATING IN
HEAVY RAIN, DISPLAYED EXCELLENT MORALE AND A STRONG COMPETITIVE
SPIRIT IN DISLODGING NVA/VC UNITS FROM TERRITORY THEY HAD SEIZED

IN AUGUST 1974.

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4.3 ON AUGUST 28 AND 29, 1974, THE NVA/VC INITIATED HEAVY GROUND ATTACKS AND INTENSIVE ARTILLERY AND ROCKET ATTACKS AGAINST 1ST DIVISION UNITS IN THE NUI BONG AREA. CONTROL OF THIS HIGH GROUND PASSED TO THE NVA/VC WHO IMMEDIATELY BEGAN USING IT AS AN OBSERVATION POINT OVERLOOKING THE PHU BAI VITAL SECTOR, WHICH INCLUDES THE AIRPORT SERVING HUE, AND HIGHWAY 1. THEY DUG IN AND BEGAN TO STORE AMMUNITION AND FOOD TO CARRY OUT AN EXTENDED DEFENSE OF THEIR STRATEGIC POSITION.

4.4 THROUGHOUT THE NEXT FOUR AND ONE-HALF MONTHS, ELEMENTS OF THE ARVN 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION UNDERTOOK A CAMPAIGN TO RETAKE THE HIGH GROUND IN THIS AREA. IT WAS A SLOW DIFFICULT PROCESS AND ONE CARRIED OUT WITH A VIEW TO MINIMIZING EXPENDITURE OF ARTILLERY. ON DECEMBER 11, HOWEVER, 1ST DIVISION ELEMENTS DISLODGED THE NVA/VC FROM MO TAU MOUNTAIN TO THE NORTH. SUBSEQUENTLY THE EFFORT TO RETAKE NUI BONG AND ITS ADJACENT CRESTS INTENSIFIED.

4.5 THE FIRST SIGNIFICANT ACTION IN THE RETAKING OF NUI BONG BEGAN BETWEEN 1400 AND 2300 HOURS ON JANUARY 15TH WHEN THE 3D CO, 1ST BN, 1ST INF REGT, ENGAGED A FORCE BELIEVED TO BE THE 7TH BN, 271ST INF REGT, 325TH NVA DIVISION AND RETOOK THE HILL 121, 2.5 KM SOUTHEAST OF NUI BONG AT YD947017 IN THUA THIEN (P).

4.6 ON JANUARY 16TH AND 17TH, THIS SAME COMPANY, (THE 3D CO, 1ST BN, 1ST REGT) FOUGHT FOR, AND WON, CONTROL OF HILL 224, 1.5 KM SOUTH OF NUI BONG AT YD929012.

4.7 ON JANUARY 17TH, THE 2D AND 4TH COS, 2D BN, 1ST REGT, REGAINED CONTROL OF NUI BONG AT YD926027 AND OF NUI NGHE LOCATED 1KM SOUTHEAST OF NUI BONG AT YD935023. ALSO ON THE 17TH, THE 1ST CO, 2D BN, 3D REGT, RECAPTURED HILL 50, 2.5 KM SOUTHWEST OF NUI BONG AT YD904021. ALL OF THE CRESTS IN THE IMMEDIATE AREA OF NUI BONG WERE ONCE AGAIN IN RVNAF CONTROL.

4.8 NOTEWORTHY IN THE SUCCESS OF THESE RECENT ACTIONS WAS THE CAREFUL PLANNING BASED ON DETAILED AIR AND GROUND OBSERVATION WHICH MADE IT POSSIBLE TO PINPOINT OBJECTIVES FOR A COORDINATED ASSAULT. AND IN ADDITION TO THE DETERMINATION AND SPIRIT DISPLAYED BY THE INDIVIDUAL INFANTRY SOLDIERS IN THESE ACTIONS, CREDIT

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MUST BE GIVEN TO THE ARTILLERY UNITS WHICH IN SOME CASES
MOVED TO WITHIN 800 METERS OF SOME NVA STRONGPOINTS AND CONTRIBUTED
SUBSTANTIALITY TO THE SUCCESS OF THE ATTACK. UNQUOTE

SAIGON 5 QUOTE DA NANG 73

5.1 IN MR-1 THE ARVN 3RD DIVISION CHIEF OF STAFF HAS BROUGHT THE
FOLLOWING SMALL-UNIT AMBUSH TO THE CONSULATE GENERAL'S ATTENTION:

5.2 REACTING TO INTELLIGENCE THAT NVA/VC CADRE WERE TO TRAVEL
TO LOWLAND AREAS OF QUANG NAM TO DISSEMINATE OPERATIONAL PLANS,
ON THE NIGHT OF JAN 12-13, 1975, THE ARVN 3RD DIVISION PLACED
A SIX-MAN AMBUSH PATROL FROM THE 3RD RECON COMPANY, LED BY A
MASTER SERGEANT PHAM HAI, ON AN INFILTRATION ROUTE 28 KMS SOUTH
OF DANANG. AT 0600 JAN 13, A GROUP OF 60 NVA/VC CADRE AND SOLDIERS
ENTERED THE AMBUSH AREA, WHEREUPON SGT. HAI OPENED FIRE AND
CALLED IN ARTILLERY, REPORTEDLY COMPLETELY CONFUSING THE
ENEMY'S MAIN BODY. RESULTS REPORTED WERE: NVA/VC: 12 KIA
3 CAPTURED (INCLUDING CADRE FROM QUANG DA SPECNNMPE)
WEAPONS CAPTURED: 5-AK-47 ASSAULT RIFLES
2-K-54 PISTOLS
1-M-63 SUB MACHINE GUN
1-30 CALIBER LIGHT MACHINE GUN
ALSO CAPTURED WERE DOCUMENTS WITH INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING THE
NVA/VC DRY SEASON CAMPAIGN. THE ARVN SUFFERED NO CASUALTIES.
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SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 RSC-01 NSCE-00 /073 W

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R 311503Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2411
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
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SAIGON 6 QUOTE NHA TRANG 42

6.1 RAMPLE OF EFFECTIVE RVNAF PERFORMANCE IN MR-2. WE HAVE MANY EXAMPLES OF EFFECTIVE RVNAF PERFORMANCE BUT ONE OF THE MOST DRAMATIC AND MOST SUITABLE FOR PUBLICATION TOOK PLACE DURING THE BATTLE FOR PHU CAT AIRBASE ON MAY 17, 1974. IN FACT THE FINAL OUTCOME OF THE COMMUNIST DRIVE WHICH FAILED AND LEFT ONE BATTALION AND PART OF ANOTHER COMPLETELY COMBAT INEFFECTIVE, MAY WELL HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR THE HERIOC ACTION DESCRIBED BELOW.

6.2 IN THE EARLY MORNING HOURS OF MAY 17, ELEMENTS OF THE 2ND REGT. OF THE NORTH VIETNAMESE 3RD DIVISION LAUNCHED A HEAVY ATTACK AGAINST THE PHU CAT AIRBASE IN BINH DINH PROVINCE. THE ATTACK WAS UNCLASSIFIED

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PART OF THE PROVINCE-WIDE OFFENSIVE AND ITS AIM WAS TO NEUTRALIZE THE BASE SO THAT COMMUNIST TROOPS DRIVING AGAINST OTHER OBJECTIVES IN THE PROVINCE WOULD NOT HAVE TO CONTEND WITH SOUTH VIETNAMESE AIR POWER. THE INITIAL ACTION DID NOT GO WELL FOR THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE. SEVERAL OUTPOSTS GUARDING THE APPROACHES TO THE BASE WERE OVERWHELMED AND EVENTUALLY THE COMMUNIST FORCES, UNDER COVER OF HEAVY MORTAR AND MACHINE GUN FIRE, SUCCEEDED IN TANKING HILL 151 WHICH IS ONLY 1500 METERS NORTHWEST OF THE RUNWAY AND OVERLOOKS THE ENTIRE BASE. THE NVA FORCES BROUGHT WITH THEM AN 82MM RECOILLESS RIFLE; A VERY ACCURATE, FLAT TRAJECTORY WEAPON CAPABLE OF DESTROYING ALL OF THE AIRCRAFT, AMMUNITION AND FUEL ON THE BASE. HAD THEY BEEN ABLE TO DIG IN AND USE THIS WEAPON, GVN AIRCRAFT AT THE BASE WOULD HAVE COME UNDER DIRECT FIRE AND, PROBABLY, COULD NOT HAVE BEEN USED. THE NEAREST OTHER AIR SUPPORT WAS AT PLEIKU, APPROXIMATELY 120 KMS AWAY.

6.3 IT WAS AT THIS POINT IN THE ACTION THAT THE 108TH RF RECONNAISSANCE CO. AND RECONNAISSANCE ELEMENTS OF THE 263RD RF BN RALLIED, CHARGED BACK UP HILL 151 AND WRESTED IT FROM NVA CONTROL. THE ACTION WAS THE TURNING POINT IN THE BATTLE AND FROM THAT POINT ON THE COMMUNIST FORCES WERE IN TROUBLE. SOUTH VIETNAMESE AIRCRAFT SUPPORTING INFANTRY UNITS WERE ABLE IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS

TO DRIVE ALL NVA FORCES FAR ENOUGH AWAY FROM PHU CAT AIRBASE SO THAT ONLY THE OCCASIONAL ROCKET COULD REACH IT AND THAT VERY INACCURATELY. THE 2ND BATTALION, 2ND REGT OF THE NVA 3RD DIVISION WAS DECIMATED AND DECLARED COMBAT INEFFECTIVE AS A RESULT OF THIS ACTION AND THE NVA 16TH AA BN. SUFFERED THE SAME FATE. IF THE 108TH AND 263RD RF BNS HAD NOT CHARGED HILL 151 AND RETAKEN IT BEFORE THE COMMUNIST FORCES HAD TIME TO GET THEIR 82MM RECOILLESS RIFLE DUG IN AND WORKING, THE OUTCOME MIGHT WELL HAVE BEEN VERY DIFFERENT. UNQUOTE

SAIGON 7 QUOTE NHA TRANG 43

7.1 IN MR-2 BETWEEN NOVEMBER 29 AND DECEMBER 16, 1974, THE 23RD ARVN DIVISION AND THE 25TH RANGER GROUP CARRIED OUT A HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL SPOILING OPERATION IN THE VICINITY OF THANH AN, PLEIKU PROVINCE. THE OPERATION WAS PROMPTED BY THE FACT THAT INTELLIGENCE HAD BEEN GATHERED BY THE GVN INDICATING THAT THE COMMUNISTS INTENDED TO STRIKE A MAJOR BLOW AT THANH AN IN DECEMBER. ACCORDINGLY, MAJOR GENERAL PHAN VAN PHU, II CORPS COMMANDER, ORDERED THAT A SWEEP IN THE VICINITY OF THANH AN UNCLASSIFIED

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BE CONDUCTED BY THE 23RD DIVISION IN COORDINATION WITH THE 25TH RANGER GROUP. DURING THE SWEEP, WHICH WAS SPEARHEADED BY THE 45TH AND 53RD ARVN REGTS, 239 COMMUNISTS WERE REPORTED KILLED, WHILE THE ARVN SUFFERED 18 KIA, 37 WIA, AND 14 MIA. IN ADDITION, THE ARVN CAPTURED ONE COMMUNIST SOLDIER, 17 CS WEAPONS, 63 INDIVIDUAL WEAPONS, 2 CHICOM TELEPHONES, AND LARGE AMOUNTS OF AMMUNITION AND DOCUMENTS. THIS SWEEP EVIDENTLY PRE-EMPTED THE ANTICIPATED COMMUNIST ATTACK ON THANH AN -- INDEED, SINCE THIS ARVN OPERATION, NO SUBSTANTIAL MAIN FORCE ATTACKS HAVE BEEN MOUNTED BY THE COMMUNISTS IN PLEIKU. UNQUOTE

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SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 RSC-01 NSCE-00 /073 W

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R 311503Z JAN 75
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SAIGON 8 QUOTE NHA TRANG 46

8.1 IN MR-2 EXAMPLE OF EFFECTIVE RVNAF PERFORMANCE: THE BATTLE FOR MOUTH OF THE AN LAO VALLEY. FOLLOWING MORE THAN TWO MONTHS OF HEAVY FIGHTING WHICH BEGAN IN MID-MAY 1974 WHEN COMMUNIST FORCES LAUNCHED A NEW OFFENSIVE IN BINH DINH PROVINCE, THE GVN, ON AUGUST 10, MOUNTED A COUNTER OFFENSIVE AGAINST ELEMENTS OF THE NVA 3RD DIVISION GUARDING THE ENTRANCE TO THE AN LAO VALLEY IN THE NORTHERN PART OF THE PROVINCE. THE AN LAO VALLEY HAS LONG BEEN A COMMUNIST STRONGHOLD AND SERVES AS A MAJOR SUPPLY POINT FOR NVA AND VC FORCES OPERATING ELSEWHERE IN THE PROVINCE. CONSEQUENTLY, IT WAS WELL DEFENDED AND ANY ATTACKING FORCE WHICH THREATENED THE COMMUNIST SUPPLY
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LINES RUNNING OUT OF THE VALLEY HAD TO EXPECT DETERMINED RESISTANCE FROM AN ENEMY FIGHTING FROM PREPARED POSITIONS ON THE HIGH GROUND WELL SUPPORTED BY ARTILLERY AND MORTAR FIRE. THE GVN OBJECTIVE, OF COURSE, WAS TO WREST THIS HIGH GROUND FROM THE COMMUNISTS SO THAT THEY WOULD DOMINATE THE ENTRANCE TO THE VALLEY BELOW AND BE ABLE TO BLOCK THE MOVEMENT OF SUPPLIES OUT OF IT.

8.2 THE INITIAL THRUSTS INTO THE AREA BY THE 47TH REGT OF ARVN'S 22ND DIVISION WERE CAUTIOUS AND PROGRESS WAS SLOW. OTHER GVN COUNTER OFFENSIVES WERE TAKING PLACE FURTHER TO THE SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST AND THE 141ST REGT OF THE NVA'S 3RD DIVISION WAS, AS EXPECTED, PUTTING UP STIFF RESISTANCE.

ONE OBSTACLE WHICH STOOK IN ARVN'S WAY WAS NUI CHEO, A SMALL BUT HEAVILY DEFENDED MOUNTAIN. GVN TROOPERS SUCCEEDED IN OCCUPYING THE SUMMIT OF NUI CHEO BRIEFLY ON SEPTEMBER 9 BEFORE BEING DRIVEN OFF BY HEAVY COMMUNIST MORTAR AND ARTILLERY FIRE. CASUALTIES ON BOTH SIDES WERE HEAVY. SHORTLY BEFORE THIS BATTLE THE JOINT GENERAL STAFF IN SAIGON HAD ISSUED AN ORDER SEVERELY RESTRICTING THE USE OF AIRCRAFT AND ARTILLERY AND THIS DECISION UNDOUBTEDLY AFFECTED THE PROGRESS OF THE CAMPAIGN. NEVERTHELESS, THE 47TH REGT MAINTAINED ITS PRESSURE AGAINST THE 141ST WHICH WAS AT THAT TIME CONSIDERED TO BE THE NVA 3RD DIVISION'S STRONGEST REGIMENT. NOW, ASSISTED BY TWO RANGER BATTALIONS, THE 47TH CONTINUED ATTACKS AGAINST NUI CHEO AND SIMULTANEOUSLY PUSHED NORTH OF THE MOUNTAIN IN A BY-PASSING ATTEMPT. THE 141ST REACTED SAVAGELY TO THESE PROBES BUT SUSTAINED HEAVY LOSSES. IN RETRIBUTION THEY BEGAN SUBJECTING BONG SON TOWN, LOCATED OUTSIDE ROUTE 1, TO LONG RANGE ARTILLERY FIRE. SEVERAL CIVILIANS WERE KILLED AND MANY HOUSES WERE DESTROYED.

8.3 IN EARLY OCTOBER, THE 47TH REGT WAS WITHDRAWN LEAVING: THE 4TH RANGER BN TO CONTINUE THE CAMPAIGN. SHORTLY THEREAFTER, HOWEVER, THE 41ST REGT/22ND DIVISION JOINED THE FRAY AND, IN A SURPRISE MOVE ON OCTOBER 16, CROSSED THE MOUNTAIN RANGE EAST OF THE AN LAO VALLEY, INTERDICTED THE COMMUNIST SUPPLY ROUTE, AND BLEW UP A BRIDGE. THEY THEN WITHDREW TO POSITIONS WHERE THEY SUCCESSFULLY RESISTED EFFORTS BY THE 141ST TO DISLODGE THEM. NOT ONLY WAS THE ARVN 41ST ABLE TO CUT THE NVA/VC SUPPLY ROUTE BUT THEY ALSO WERE ABLE TO MAINTAIN A UNCLASSIFIED

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POSITION IN THE VALLEY WHICH THREATENED TO PERMANENTLY CUT OFF THE FLOW OF SUPPLIES FROM THE NORTH. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME SINCE 1971 THAT NON-COMMUNIST FORCES HAD BEEN IN THE VALLEY AND THE FIRST TIME SINCE 1964 THAT AN ARVN FORCE, UNSUPPORTED BY ALLIED TROOPS, HAD BEEN THERE. UNFORTUNATELY, BONG SON TOWN STILL WAS WITHIN COMMUNIST ARTILLERY RANGE AND SOUTH VIETNAMESE CIVILIANS CONTINUED TO BE WOUNDED AND DIE THERE.

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SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 RSC-01 NSCE-00 /073 W

----- 127927

R 311503Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2413

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

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8.4 INTENSE EFFORTS BY THE NVA 141ST TO DISLODGE THE ARVN 41ST CONTINUED OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL WEEKS BUT WERE NOT SUCCESSFUL AND COST THE COMMUNIST FORCES DEARLY. THE CONTINUED INTERDICTION OF THEIR MAJOR SUPPLY LINE FROM THE VALLEY WAS OBVIOUSLY BEGINNING TO HURT. MEANWHILE THE ARVN 41ST AND THE 6TH RANGER GROUP (WHICH HAD REPLACE THE 4TH) GRADUALLY BEGAN TO EXPAND THEIR HOLDINGS.

8.5 IN LATE NOVEMBER AND EARLY DECEMBER THE 4TH AND 6TH RANGER GROUPS WERE TRANSFERRED TO THE HIGHLANDS BUT THE ARVN 40TH REGT/22ND DIVISION WAS TRANSFERRED BACK TO BINH DINH AND TWO BNS OF THE 40TH JOINED THE 41ST AT THE MOUTH OF THE AN ALO VALLEY. SHORTLY THEREAFTER, THE ARVN 42ND REPLACED THE

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41ST ON THE LINE AND THE NVA REINFORCED THEIR 141ST WITH ELEMENTS OF THEIR 12TH REGT. AS THE YEAR ENDED, THE OPPOSING FORCES COULD LOOK BACK UPON NEARLY FIVE MONTHS IN WHICH ELEMENTS OF GENERAL PHAN DINH NIEM'S 22ND DIVISION HAD GRADUALLY BUT SURELY EXPANDED AND STRENGTHENED THEIR POSITIONS AND HAD SUCCESSFULLY RESISTED ALL EFFORTS BY THE COMMUNIST FORCES TO

DISLODGE THEM.

8.6 THE FIRST TWO WEEKS OF 1975 SAW RENEWED HEAVY FIGHTING; AS THE NVA 12TH AND 141ST REGTS MADE WHAT APPEARED TO BE AN ALL-OUT EFFORT TO DRIVE THE ARVN 40TH AND 42ND REGTS FROM THEIR COMMANDING POSITIONS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE MOUTH OF THE AN LAO VALLEY. AT THE SAME TIME, THE ARVN FORCES, WHILE RESISTING VIOLENT ASSAULTS BY COMMUNIST TROOPS, EXPANDED THEIR OWN HOLDINGS AND WON ADDITIONAL COMMANDING POSITIONS ON HIGH GROUND, ESPECIALLY CHEO MOUNTAIN. VICTORY WAS IN SIGHT AND THE LOCAL CIVILIAN POPULATION FROM BONG SON FELT IT. DURING LULLS IN THE FIGHTING, WOMEN AND YOUNG GIRLS FROM THE TOWN BEARING FOOD AND WATER MADE THEIR WAY TO THE FRONT LINES TO RESUPPLY THE SOLDIERS. BY MID-JANUARY IT WAS APPARENT THAT GENERAL NIEM'S 22ND DIVISION HAD WON THE BATTLE. COMMUNIST CASUALTIES WERE VERY HIGH WITH AT LEAST TWO BATTALIONS OF THE NVA 141ST COMPLETELY DECIMATED AND HEAVY LOSSES IN THE 12TH AS WELL.

8.7 TO CELEBRATE THE VICTORY, II CORPS COMMANDER MAJOR GENERAL PHAM VAN PHU ARRIVED IN BONG SON TO CONGRATULATE THE TROOPS AND PRESENT THEM WITH WELL-DESERVED DECORATIONS. AN IMPROMPTU PARADE TOOK PLACE WITH THE BATTLEFIELD HEROES MARCHING DOWN THE MAIN STREET OF BONG SON HAND-IN-HAND WITH YOUNG HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS WHO HAD GARLANDED THEM WITH FLOWERS. EVERYTHING THE CARRYING OF SUPPLIES BY THE LADIES OF BONG SON, THE MEDAL CEREMONY AND THE "FLOWER PARADE", WAS FILMED FOR TELEVISION. GENERAL NIEM HAS REASON TO BE PROUD OF HIS 22ND DIVISION, ALL FOUR REGTS OF WHICH PARTICIPATED AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER IN THE LONG, BLOODY BUT SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGN FOR CONTROL OF THE MOUTH OF THE AN LAO VALLEY. UNQUOTE

SAIGON 9 QUOTE NHA TRANG 56

9.1 THE BATTLE OF PLEI ME IN MR-2. BETWEEN AUGUST 4 AND SEPTEMBER 2, 1974, FOUR COMPANIES OF THE 82ND RANGER BATTALION, LATER ASSISTED UNCLASSIFIED

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BY TWO BATTALIONS OF THE 53RD ARVN REGIMENT, HELD CAMP PLEI ME IN SOUTHERN PLEIKU PROVINCE AGAINST UNRELENTING PRESSURE BY ELEMENTS OF THE 48TH AND 64TH NVA REGIMENTS. THE BATTLE BEGAN ON AUGUST 4 WHEN AN NVA FORCE OF ABOUT TWO COMPANY ATTACKED THE 1ST COMPANY OF THE 82ND BATTALION, FORCING THEM TO WITHDRAW INTO PLEI ME CAMP. SUBSEQUENTLY, ON AUGUST 10 AND AUGUST 15, RESPECTIVELY, THE COMMUNISTS FORCED THE GVN FORCES FROM THEIR OUTPOSTS AT CHU HO AND HILL 509. BUT THE REAL COMMUNIST OBJECTIVE WAS THE TAKING OF PLEI ME CAMP ITSELF. REPEATED ATTACKS AGAINST THE CAMP THROUGHOUT AUGUST FOLLOWED A SIMILAR ASSAULTS. THE HIGHWATER MARK OF THE COMMUNIST THRUSTS CAME ON AUGUST 29, WHEN NVA TROOPS BROKE INTO THE INNER DEFENSES OF THE CAMP -- ONLY TO BE COMPLETELY STYMIED BY MINES AND

THE TIMELY REACTION WITH MASSIVE M-79 GRENADE FIRE OF THE DEFENDERS. BY SEPTEMBER 2, THE TIDE OF THE BATTLE HAD BEEN EFFECTIVELY TURNED. THE 1ST AND 3RD BATTALIONS OF THE 53RD REGIMENT ARRIVED AT A POSITION NORTHEAST OF PLEI ME, RELIEVING PRESSURE ON THE CAMP; AND THE DEFENDERS SUCCESSFULLY BROKE OUT OF THE CAMP, REOCCUPYING THE OUTPOST AT CHU HO.

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
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9.2 THE BATTLE AT PLEI ME SEVERELY TESTED THE METTLE OF GVN TROOPS. THE RANGERS SUFFERED FROM LACK OF FOOD AND WATER -- BECAUSE FOR LONG PERIODS NO OUTSIDE SUPPLIES REACHED THE CAMP, THE TROOPS ATE ONLY PREVIOUSLY STORED RICE, AND DRANK ONLY RAIN WATER; THEY LIVED IN FLOODED COMMO TRENCHES -- FROM WHICH MANY SOLDIERS CONTRACTED SCABIES. MOST TELLINGLY OF ALL, THEY WITHSTOOD 10,000 ROUNDS OF COMMUNIST ARTILLERY FIRE AND 20

COMMUNIST GROUND ATTACKS -- KILLING 324 NVA SOLDIERS IN THE PROCESS.

9.3 ON SEPTEMBER 10 A CEREMONY WAS HELD AT THE PLEIKI SPORTS STADIUM TO WELCOME THE 82ND RANGER BATTALION AFTER THEIR VICTORY AT PLEI ME. APPROXIMATELY 3,000 PEOPLE ATTENDED THE CEREMONY. A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT GAVE
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A SPEECH IN WHICH HE THANKED THE 82ND FOR THEIR BRAVE DEFENSE OF PLEIKU. AFTER THE CEREMONIES, MANY LOCAL MERCHANTS INVITED MEMBERS OF THE BATTALION TO THEIR HOMES OR BUSINESSES FOR LUNCH, AND THE LOCAL THEATRE GAVE A FREE SHOWING FOR THE TROOPS. SUBSEQUENTLY, MANY OF THE RANGERS RECEIVED DECORATIONS AND PROMOTIONS FOR THEIR BATTLEFIELD VALOR FROM THE COMMANDING GENERAL OF II CORPS. UNQUOTE

SAIGON 10 QUOTE BIEN HOA 662

10.1 EXAMPLE OF EFFECTIVE RVNAF PERFORMANCE IN MR-3. THE MOST INSPIRING PERSONAL PERFORMANCE BY A MEMBER OF ARVN DURING THE RECENT FIGHTING IN MR-3 WAS THAT OF ASPIRANT HUYNH DINH CAM. CAM, WHO RECEIVED A PROMOTION TO 2ND LIEUTENANT AND A DECORATION FOR HIS ACTIONS, SINGLEHANDEDLY HELD THE PHUOC HOI SUB-SUBSECTOR AGAINST COMMUNIST ATTACK FOR THREE DAYS.

10.2 ON DEC 7, 1974, ASPIRANT CAM WAS THE DEPUTY SUB-SUBSECTOR COMMANDER AT PHUOC HOI VILLAGE, IN COMMAND OF 30 PF NATIONAL POLICE, AND RD CADRE. A COMMUNIST UNIT, ESTIMATED AT BATTALION SIZE BY LT CAM, ATTACKED THE SUB-SUBSECTOR. CAM AND HIS MEN REPULSED THE ATTACK, KILLING AT LEAST 18, AND TAKING TWO PRISONERS WHO LATER WERE IDENTIFIED AS MEMBERS OF THE CRACK 101ST NVA INDEPENDENT REGIMENT.

10.3 DURING THE FIRST FOUR DAYS, CAM REPORTS HE SENT 15 OF HIS FORCE OUTSIDE THE OUTPOST TO PATROL AND GET FOOD. HE REPORTS THAT ON THE FIFTH DAY (DECEMBER 11), HE SENT THE REMAINING 15 OUT TO LINK UP WITH THE OTHER 15 TO FIND AND DESTROY THE NVA/VC BATTALION C.P. (COMMENT: THIS FORCE REPORTED TO NINH AN VILLAGE ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF TAY NINH LATER THAT DAY, CLAIMING TO HAVE DESTROYED THE BN HQ. THERE IS CONSIDERABLE SUSPICION IN TAY NINH THAT THEY DESERTED CAM, BUT HE SAYS THIS IS UNTRUE. END COMMENT)

10.4 DURING THE NEXT THREE DAYS, CAM FOUGHT OFF FIVE NVA/VC ATTACKS, USING MORTAR, MACHINE GUN, AND RIFLE FIRE, AS WELL AS HAND GRENADES IN AN ATTEMPT TO CONVINCE THE COMMUNISTS THE POST WAS FULLY MANNED. HE WAS FINALLY RELIEVED BY ELEMENTS OF THE 25TH ARVN DIV AT 1700 HOURS ON DECEMBER 13.

10.5 DURING THE ENTIRE PERIOD, IN ADDITION TO HIS DETERMINED DEFENSE
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OF HIS POST, CAM INSURED THAT HIS TWO PRISONERS WERE CARED FOR SHARING HIS RATIONS AND CIGARETTES WITH THEM. THE RATION SITUATION AT THE POST WAS SO SEVERE NEAR THE END OF THE SIEGE THAT CAM WAS FORCED TO KILL THE ANIMALS (A DOG, A DOVE, AND A FIGHTING COCK) AT THE POST TO FEED HIMSELF AND HIS PRISONERS.

10.6 BIO INFORMATION. SECOND LIEUTENANT HUYNH DINH CAM WAS BORN MARCH 1, 1947 IN QUANG NAM. HE JOINED THE ARMY APRIL 19, 1965. HE GRADUATED FROM SPECIAL OFFICER TRAINING AT THE NHA TRANG NCO TRAINING CENTER IN 1971 WITH THE RANK OF ASPIRANT. HE WAS ASSIGNED AS DEPUTY SUB-SUBSECTOR COMMANDER AT PHUOC HOI VILLAGE ON APRIL 1, 1974, FOLLOWING ATTENDANCE AT THE SUB-SUBSECTOR COURSE AT VAN KIEP. UNQUOTE

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SAIGON 11 QUOTE CAN THO 21

11.1 IN MR-4 THE FOLLOWING ARE THREE RECENT EXAMPLES OF PARTICULARLY EFFECTIVE RVNAF PERFORMANCE. THE MOST FAR-REACHING EXAMPLE WAS THE REDEPLOYMENT OF TROOPS DURING THE EARLY DAYS OF THE DECEMBER HIGHPOINT. WHEN HEAVY FIGHTING FIRST ERUPTED IN THE DELTA DEC 6, COMMUNIST ATTACKS WERE CONCENTRATED IN THE SOUTHERN AREA WHERE GVN MILITARY AND CIVIL INSTALLATIONS EXPERIENCED PRESSURE UNPARALLELED SINCE THE CEASEFIRE. AT THE SAME TIME, INTELLIGENCE SOURCES INDICATED THAT THE 5TH NVA DIVISION, WHICH HAD BEEN TRAINING AND REFITTING IN CAMBODIA FOR SEVERAL WEEKS, WAS MOVING ACROSS THE BORDER IN THE LARGELY UNINHABITED AREAS OF THE NORTHERN DELTA.

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DESPITE THE IMMEDIACY OF THE THREAT IN THE SOUTH, CORPS COMMANDER MG NGUYEN KHOA NAM, WHO HAD BEEN APPOINTED ONLY A MONTH BEFORE, IMMEDIATELY FOCUSED HIS ATTENTION ON THE MORE DISTANT BUT FAR MORE SERIOUS THREAT TO THE NORTH. HE DISPATCHED TROOPS OF THE 9TH ARVN DIVISION THEN DEPLOYED IN THE SOUTH TO THEIR PRIMARY AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY ALONG THE CAMBODIAN BORDER. SHORTLY THEREAFTER, ROUTE 29, THE ONLY LAND ROUTE TO KIEN TUONG PROVINCE, WAS CUT FOR AN EXTENDED PERIOD. HAD GENERAL NAM BEEN DISTRACTED BY THE SITUATION IN THE SOUTH AND FAILED TO REACT PROMPTLY TO THE 5TH DIVISION THREAT, A COSTLY AND TIME-CONSUMING OPERATION WOULD HAVE BEEN REQUIRED TO MOVE TROOPS TO THE AREA OF PRINCIPAL THREAT. THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE WOULD HAVE BEEN MOVEMENT BY AIR, SEVERELY TAXING RVNAF'S ALREADY OVERBURDENED AIR ASSETS. THOUGH HEAVY FIGHTING CONTINUES IN KIEN TUONG, THE 5TH DIVISION HAS THUS FAR BEEN UNABLE TO ACHIEVE ITS PROBABLE GOAL--ESTABLISHMENT OF A SECURE BASE AREA FROM WHICH IT CAN LAUNCH ATTACKS AGAINST HIGHWAY 4 AND OTHER MAIN ARTERIES TO SAIGON. MOREOVER, SOME OF THE NVA/VC UNITS SUFFERED SERIOUS LOSSES AS THEY RAN INTO THE NEWLY ARRIVED 9TH DIVISION TROOPERS.

11.2 AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL, A REGIMENT OF THE 21ST ARVN DIVISION (WHICH HAS BEEN CONSIDERED ONE OF ARVN'S WEAKEST DIVISION) SCORED A MAJOR VICTORY IN CHUONG THIEN PROVINCE AT THE END OF DECEMBER AS A RESULT OF SOUND TACTICS AND TIGHT UNIT DISCIPLINE. SHORTLY AFTER CHRISTMAS, ELEMENTS OF THE 95A AND D-2 NVA REGIMENTS WERE REPORTEDLY CONCENTRATING IN AN AREA IN WHICH THEY DO NOT NORMALLY OPERATE. THE 33RD ARVN REGIMENT BEGAN MOVING TOWARD THE AREA OF THE NVA CONCENTRATION

BUT, WHEN NO CONTACT WAS MADE, 21ST DIVISION COMMANDER, COLONEL MACH VAN TRUONG, REALIZED HE WAS MOVING INTO A TRAP AND HALTED HIS UNITS ADVANCE BEFORE HE REACHED THE LIMITS OF EFFECTIVE ARTILLERY AND ARMOR SUPPORT. MEANWHILE, HE MOVED AN ARMORED UNIT BY A CIRCUITOUS ROUTE TO A POSITION BEHIND HIS INFANTRY TROOPS; THE NVA APPARENTLY WAS NOT AWARE OF THE PRESENCE OF THE ARMORED UNIT. WHEN ELEMENTS OF THE D-2 MOVED INTO WHAT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE AN AMBUSH POSITION, THEY FOUND THEMSELVES CAUGHT BETWEEN THE 33RD REGIMENT AND THE ARMOR, AND PRESENTED A CONCENTRATED TARGET FOR GVN ARTILLERY. SUBSEQUENTLY, OTHER ELEMENTS OF THE D-2, UNCLASSIFIED

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ASSUMING ARVN ARMORED UNITS WOULD RETURN TO THE PROVINCE CAPITAL AT VI THANH FOR THE NIGHT, TOOK UP POSITIONS TO THE NORTH OF THE MATTLEFIELD AND POSITIONED AN ARTILLERY PLATOON TO THE EAST WHERE THEY WERE TO FIRE ON THE ARVN ARMOR WHEN GROUND CONTACT WAS ESTABLISHED. RATHER THAN FALL INTO THE TRAP, HOWEVER, THE ARMORED UNITS MOVED EAST AND LITERALLY RAN OVER THE NVA ARTILLERY POSITION. IN THREE DAYS OF FIGHTING, ARVN CLAIMED 347 NVA KILLED. SUBSEQUENT ANALYSIS INDICATED THAT, PRIOR TO THIS SETBACK, THE D-2 INTENDED TO ADVANCE FROM THE AREA OF THE BATTLE ALONG AN ADJACENT CANAL TO ROUTE 31, CUTTING THE ONLY LAND ROUTE TO VI THANH AND ENDANGERING THE PROVINCE CAPITAL ITSELF. THIS PLAN HAS BEEN THWARTED AND THE D-2 FORCED TO RETIRE FROM THE BATTLEFIELD.

11.3 THE LOWEST LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANT DELTA FIGHTING IS AT THE RF AND PF OUTPOSTS, OF WHICH THERE ARE HUNDREDS IN MR4. THESE OUTPOSTS ARE PRIME TARGETS FOR ATTACK, AND THEIR DEFENSE IS BY FAR THE MOST COMMON TEST OF RVNAF EFFECTIVENESS AT THE SMALL-UNIT LEVEL. THE MOST RECENT EXAMPLE OF EXTREMELY EFFECTIVE PERFORMANCE BY THE TROOPS MANNING SUCH AN OUTPOST OCCURRED IN MID-JANUARY WHEN A REMOTE OUTPOST IN THE EXTREME NORTH OF KIEN TUONG PROVINCE MANNED BY 15 POPULAR FORCE TROOPERS 5 OF THE PF WERE KILLED AND SEVERAL WOUNDED, BUT THEY HELD THEIR POSITION. THE OUTPOST DEFENDERS LACKED THE STRENGTH TO SWEEP THE AREA AFTER THE ATTACK, BUT AERIAL OBSERVATION CONFIRMED THAT THE HANDFUL OF PF HAD KILLED ABOUT 100 COMMUNIST ATTACKERS; SUBSEQUENT REPORTS FROM VILLAGERS IN THE AREA INDICATED THAT THE FIGURE MAY HAVE BEEN EVEN HIGHER. HENCE A SMALL BUT RESOLUTELY MANNED MILITIA OUTPOST IN A REMOTE LOCATION BECAME AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN RVNAF'S SUCCESS IN COUNTERING THE THRUST OF THE 5TH NVA DIVISION ACROSS THE BORDER FROM CAMBODIA. UNQUOTE
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ARMED FORCES, POLITICAL SITUATION, PROGRESS REPORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 31 JAN 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975SAIGON01236
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750038-0249
From: SAIGON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t1975012/aaaaablk.tel
Line Count: 975
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 18
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 STATE 277526
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: greeneet
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 01 DEC 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <01 DEC 2003 by ThomasVJ>; APPROVED <30 DEC 2003 by greeneet>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: EXAMPLES OF EFFECTIVE RVNAF PERFORMANCE
TAGS: MILI, VS
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006